



R. Ned Lebow

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Dartmouth



"Fear, Interest and Honor: A General Theory of International Relations"

Wednesday, September 28, 2005

12:00 p.m.

**Mershon Center
Room 120**



Richard Ned Lebow's latest research seeks to define a theory of politics situated in a theory of history based on ontological and epistemological factors. His theory stems from the the three parts of classical Greek psyche, comprised of appetite, spirit, and reason. Lebow thinks that strong community, and therefore order, stems from a balanced intersection of all three: strength in reason can restrain whims of appetite and spirit, by suggesting that these psychic needs are best sated by the merits of a strong community balanced by reason. Lebow thinks this leads to order, and that order is lost when there is a loss of control over appetite or spirit.

Lebow believed that contemporary theories about order focus on structure and are not theories of change. He is proposing a theory of process and order, infused with his interpretation about the role of psyche and order/disorder, and he theorizes the processes that drive change, not just the structures that are impacted by it.

Lebow focuses specifically on the Greek understanding of spirit (one aspect of which is self-esteem); he thinks it is a concept that has been ignored in contemporary understandings of politics, which tend to focus on "appetite." He argues, for example, that spirit is different in the modern world than in the ancient world, for a variety of reasons, and proposes looking at how "standing," as an example of spirit, impacts contemporary politics.

Standing, Lebow explains, is not based only on wealth or military strength, but on how you use it. Canada, for example, has standing not because it has military power, but because it uses its wealth to build on ideological strengths, and is gaining standing in the international community because of the belief that a nation can become stronger by building a better life for its citizens.

The United States, instead, seems to hold onto the idea that standing is strengthened by the use of military might, and Lebow thinks that the Iraq war might be the last attempt to gain influence via the use of military power. Standing and power, he argues, don't emerge from a strong exertion of power (and the hope that other nations will bandwagon to it), but may prove to actually undermine power. The United States has gone from having power had from admiration conferred by others out of respect to a system where it is trying to keep power through the use of threats and bribes, which he sees as destructive and costly.

As evidence that power is shifting away from standing based on military power, Lebow points to the U.N. security council, where nations hold seats not based on traditional military strength, but on "something else," something that confers standing independent of size of military or economy.

Lebow's theory, which attempts to look at the intersections between appetite, spirit, and reason, how they've changed over time, and how the impact contemporary society, will appear in his forthcoming book.

Richard Ned Lebow is the James O. Freedman Presidential Professor of Government at Dartmouth College. Before joining the Dartmouth faculty, Lebow received his Ph.D. from The City College of New York and went on to teach political science at The City College of New York, Cornell University, and The Johns Hopkins Graduate School of International Affairs in Bologna, Italy, and public policy at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. Lebow was also a professor of political science, history, and psychology at The Ohio State University and served as the director of the Mershon Center.

Lebow is the author of *Ethnics, Interest and Order: The Tragic Vision of Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), *Learning from the Cold War*, co-edited with Richard Herrmann (Palgrave, 2004), *Unmaking the West: Counterfactuals and Causation*, co-edited with Phil Tetlock and Geoffrey Parker, (University of Michigan Press, forthcoming), "Deterrence: Then and Now," (to appear in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28, October 2005), "Reason, Emotion, and Cooperation" (to appear in *International Politics*, 42, no 3, 2005), "Tragedy, Politics and Political Science" (to appear in *International Relations*, Spring 2005), and *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, co-edited with Claudio Fogu and Wulf Kansteiner, (Duke University Press, forthcoming).

Lebow is the ex-president of the International Society of Political Psychology and is actively involved with the Onassis Foundation Fellow in Ancient Greek History and Culture. Lebow won the Alexander L. George Prize for the best book in political psychology for *Ethnics, Interest and Order: The Tragic Vision of Politics*.

Lebow's research is in the interstices of history, psychology and political science and he uses historical evidence and psychological concepts to address substantive political questions. Currently, his research interests include international relations, conflict management, psychological models of learning, philosophy of social science, conflict prevention, regional conflict, bargaining and negotiation, case studies, psychological experiments, and scenario generation.